



THE COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**New York City Council
Joint Hearing of the Committees on Education and Women's Issue
February 11, 2014**

**Testimony of Marissa Martin
Budget Policy Manager, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families**

Good afternoon. My name is Marissa Martin, and I am Budget Policy Manager of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families. We would like to thank Education Committee Chair, Daniel Dromm and Women's Issues Committee Chair, Laurie Cumbo and members of the Education and Women's Issues Committees for holding this important hearing on Resolution 2, that supports the City's plan to establish high-quality universal pre-Kindergarten for all eligible four-year olds and a high-quality after school program for middle-school-aged youth.

Since 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, and works to improve the health and well-being of Asian Pacific American (APA) children and families in New York City in three key policy areas: education, health and child welfare. CACF challenges the stereotype of Asian Pacific Americans as a "model minority" and advocates on behalf of underserved families in our community, especially immigrants struggling with poverty and limited English skills. We work with our membership of over 50 community based organizations to promote better policies, funding, and services for East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander children, youth, and families.

CACF also co-leads the 13% and Growing Coalition, a group of over 45 Asian led and serving organizations that work together to ensure that New York City's budget protects the most vulnerable Asian Pacific American New Yorkers. Coalition members employ thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Currently, the Asian Pacific American community is by percentage the fastest growing group in New York City, nearly doubling every decade since 1970, and is 13% of the population. Unfortunately, current levels of public funding for the Asian Pacific American community remain disproportionate to our community's needs.

- 1 out of 25 APA children live in poverty.
- 26.5% of APA live in poverty, the highest of all racial groups in NYC.
- APAs have the highest rate (42%) of linguistic isolation meaning that no one over the age of 14 in a household speaks English well.
- 1 out of 4 APA high school students does not graduate on time.
- 1 out of 8 APAs in NYC are uninsured.

As a member of the Campaign for Children and New York City Youth Alliance, **we strongly support the City's plan to implement a modest tax increase in order to fund a full day Universal Pre-Kindergarten program and high-quality after school programs.** These programs are especially important for immigrant youth who struggle with English language proficiency, the acculturation process, and inadequate academic preparation. Immigrant youth come from families that face high rates of poverty, live in linguistic isolation, and lack the knowledge of available systems and resources. Despite the "model minority" stereotype, Asian Pacific American youth must also overcome challenges:

- 1 out of 4 Asian Pacific American high school students does not graduate on time or at all.
- 1 out of 5 Asian Pacific American students is an English Language Learner.
- According to the New York State Department of Education, only 50% of Asian Pacific American (APA) students¹ are considered prepared for college and career.² For APA students in high need urban-suburban areas, the rate drops to 35.2%.³

We were glad to see that the City acknowledged the unique challenges immigrant youth face in Mayor de Blasio's *Ready to Launch* plan and included a community needs assessment for all schools and CBO's who applied for these programs to ensure culturally competent, language accessible services are taken into consideration. During this RFP evaluation process, the City needs to ensure that small CBOs that serve emerging immigrant communities be supported. These organizations are rooted in and have the trust of their communities. They are often the first to become aware of and respond to the community's needs in a culturally competent and linguistically appropriate manner. A decrease in funding to these grassroots organizations translates into a diminished capacity to address the community's needs.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and we urge the New York City Council to pass Resolution 2 to allow New York City to establish high-quality programs that young new Yorkers deserve. We look forward to working with the City Council to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the services and support they need to thrive.

¹ "Most New York Students Are Not College Ready," New York Times, Feb. 7, 2011. Available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/08/nyregion/08regents.html?_r=1&hp.

² Ibid. According to the New York State Department of Education College and Career Ready is defined as achieving a grade of 80 on the Math Regents, and a 75 on the English Regents. It is important to note that by their calculations, these grades merely predict a C grade for college level courses in these same subject areas.

³ Ibid.

Testimony

Of

**Candice Anderson
Executive Director**



**Before the New York City Council
Education and Women's Issues Committees**

February 11, 2014

Good afternoon, my name is Candice Anderson, and I am the Executive Director of Cool Culture. Before I begin, I would like to thank the Council members of the Women's Committee for the opportunity to provide you with some insight into the work we do with New York City's subsidized Pre-Kindergarten, Child Care, and Head Start programs, and to speak to the importance of quality early care and education for young children.

Fifteen years ago, the former Deputy Commissioner of Child Care and Head Start, Edwina Meyers, joined forces with Gail Velez, a children's publisher and Head Start director, to develop a program that would create a bridge between low-income families, preschool programs and the many wonderful cultural institutions for which that our great city is known.

Today, **Cool Culture:**

- **Partners with 65% of NYC's system of subsidized early education for low-income families - more than 400 subsidized Pre-Kindergarten Child Care, Head Start and Title I public schools throughout the five boroughs to enhance classroom learning and increase family involvement in their children's education. The organization** has over a decade of experience connecting at-risk children and parents to arts and science education and, providing technical assistance and resources that enhance the quality of early education through the arts.
- **Reaches 50,000 very low-income families, providing parents and children with free unlimited admission to 90 participating museums, botanical gardens and zoos** so that they can use the remarkable arts and educational resources within to support their children's education.

Ready to Launch:

Cool Culture applauds both the Mayor's proposed plan and the City Council's resolution to provide every four-year old with full-day pre-Kindergarten (pre-K), and to enhance the quality of preschool education for an estimated 73,250 four-year-olds by the 2015 – 2016 school year.

As you know, the past decade has brought a sequence of deep cuts to early education programs, and many now struggle to find the resources necessary to ensure quality education in the classroom. **A tax increase on New York City residents earning more than \$500,000 per year provides a reliable funding stream to support a high-quality pre-K program and a high-quality after school program.**

Low-income working parents depend on access to early care and education to remain in the workforce. Equally important, quality early education addresses the achievement gap and promotes school readiness by fostering children’s growth in cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Given the ambitious nature of Ready to Launch, the next few weeks and months will be critical to ensuring an infrastructure that supports the creation of high quality programming, including early childhood arts education. As articulated in the Department of Education’s *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts*, excellence in arts education begins in early childhood and requires a standards-based, rigorous approach to teaching the arts. As the details are worked out, Cool Culture recommends that towards the Ready to Launch objective of “employ[ing] strategies for advancing quality that build on existing systems,” the administration develop a plan that leverages New York City’s world-class “system” of cultural institutions and arts organizations.

The benefits of a high quality early childhood arts education to children’s vocabulary development, critical thinking are well documented. Museums’ sensory-rich environments stimulate curiosity and foster vocabulary-rich family interactions that boost young children’s oral-language skills, emergent- and visual-literacy skills and early reading success.¹ **Cultural institutions, teaching artists and museum educators have rich collections and programs they can offer children and families, and can play a vital role in developing the learning skills of young children in their communities, supporting family involvement, and educational quality.**

With major changes in New York City’s system of preschool education creating an opportunity for improved quality, the City Council along with the Mayor has a critically important role to play to ensure that the city’s most vulnerable children have access to a holistic, high quality education.

Thank you.

¹ Leon Lynn. Language-Rich Home and School Environments Are Key to Reading Success. 1997. The Harvard Education Letter. Volume XIII, Number 4; and Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills. The Institute for Museum and Library Services. July 2009.



February 11, 2014

Statement of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt to the New York City Council Committees on Education and Women's Issues Regarding Universal Pre-Kindergarten

HMH has been pleased to be a committed partner with the NYC DOE in its mission to educate all children in NYC. Given the robust research demonstrating the long-term positive impacts of a comprehensive Pre-Kindergarten program, we applaud Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina for their focus in this very important area.

Based on our years of experience, we believe a quality Pre-K program includes authentic instruction in key developmental and academic milestones that is research driven, standards focused, and engaging for all learners.

HMH is committed to supporting this very important educational area through continued development of comprehensive materials in curriculum, assessment, as well as professional development that fosters curiosity driven learning for both children and the adults that teach them. We stand ready to offer our expertise to the Mayor and the Chancellor as they implement this very important program.